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Presiding Elder

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Presiding Elder

Having decided to return to this work the second year, I made ample provision for my team and, in the latter part of August, I started, in company with Brother Havens, to Marion, Linn County, the seat of our annual conference. Near Toledo we attended a very pleasant camp meeting, at which we spent the Sabbath, and there greeted many of our old ministerial friends. As a long dreary winter makes a delightful spring by the law of contrast, so my pioneer experience gave an unusual interest to our annual meeting, making friendships more dear and religious privileges more precious.

As I had no competitors for the office of presiding elder at Sioux City, I was returned without opposition. On my way back to my appointment I had the pleasure of the bishop's company to the city of Des Moines. He had to meet another conference at this place, and I offered to take him through in my buggy. I found him one of the most genial and cheerful traveling companions that I had met, and for the first time in my life I had the honor of being raised above a bishop. This result was reached without any

effort on my part or any opposition from him. It was in this wise. His weight was about 230 pounds, and mine 160; so when the springs of the seat on his side went down, mine went up, and thus in altitude I was constantly his superior.

Passing along the prairie the first day, said he, "Brother Taylor, as you have a new buggy, why don't you get a fancy horse?"

"I will tell you after a little while", I answered.

Within two or three hours we came to one of those terrible sloughs, near Marengo, which required all the skill and strength of my animal to take us through; but Fanny came out victorious on dry land.

"I now know," said the bishop, "why you do not want a fancy animal; you do not wish to be left in the mud."

Between Marengo and Newton we stopped at a hotel for dinner, and sat down to the table with about twenty boarders. As they began to ply their knives and forks, Bishop Ames called a halt, and said to the landlord: "If you please, we will ask God's blessing upon this food." Which, being done, they resumed action, but kept an eye of interest upon the stranger, wondering who and what he could be.

After he had finished his meal and retired to the sitting room, the landlord came to me and in-

quired, "Who is this man that asked that blessing?"

Said I, "That is Bishop Edward R. Ames, of the Methodist Episcopal Church."

"Bishop Ames!" said he. "Then my table has been honored with a bishop." Hurrying to the door, as some of his boarders were leaving, he called out to them: "Did you know that we had a bishop at our table?" And thus, until we started, he was communicating the good news to everyone he met. It seemed one of the grandest events of his life; and I doubt not that he treasured it up as a precious memory.

At the close of the third day we landed at Des Moines and, there being a camp meeting at Saylorville, a few miles distant, I went down to that and spent the Sabbath. There I found my dear old friend, Rev. J. B. Hardy, one of the best preachers of the Iowa Conference and presiding elder of the Des Moines district. He informed me that I must preach on the Sabbath at ten o'clock A. M., to be followed by Rev. George B. Jocelyn. For some reason neither of us was highly favored in our sermons, and for my own part I felt somewhat mortified.

On Monday morning the elder said, "At nine A. M. you must preach again." And now, mark the benefits of a failure. Had I made a happy

effort on Sunday morning, I should not have felt my dependence upon God, in that helpless sense as I felt it now; but this brought me very low at the Savior's feet. Before I left the consecrated spot in the grove, I had grasped with my faith the divine arm. Baptized with this spirit, I ascended the pulpit and preached on the victory of faith. I need not detail the result. This much, however, I can say, that at one period in my discourse the weight of divine glory was beyond any former experience.

Dr. Jocelyn; what shall I say of him! For years we were members of the same conference; he was one of my successors at Old Zion in the city of Burlington; and at this time he was pastor of the Methodist Church in Des Moines. It was there, from month to month, that the members of the legislature sat under his ministry, edified and delighted, and room could hardly be found for the crowds that attended. No minister of the gospel ever left our State with a better record than George B. Jocelyn, and the Michigan Conference seldom if ever received a more valuable accession. Albion College, of which he was so long president, was very much blessed and prospered under his faithful labors, and his name like sweet perfume will go down to other generations.

After a delightful season at this meeting, I

started onward, and within three days I was welcomed to my old home at Sioux City and Sergeant's Bluff. Rev. C. J. Campbell was now stationed at Sac City, and William Black at Denison and Carroll. After the arrival of the former, we held his first quarterly meeting, which was protracted through another week. The Lord poured out his Spirit upon this place, which resulted in the conversion of about twenty persons. One good feature of this revival was that it was married to a temperance society. Whisky and grace are incompatible, and the only way of success in religious societies is to deal with liquor as Putnam did with the wolf — take it square between the eyes, and then see that there is no danger of its restoration to life.

Before I left this meeting to return home, Brother Campbell complained of a pain in his toe and, on examining it, there was a red, round spot on the fleshy part about the size of a five-cent piece. Anticipating nothing serious, I started for home, and when I heard from him again he was in his grave. He tried to send me word, but failed. It was a case of the erysipelas. Its progress could not be arrested, until physicians decided that the limb must be amputated above the part inflamed. He finally consented, but the shock was too great. In the reaction he expired,

but died like a Christian. His remains are now slumbering in the graveyard at Sac City, reminding us of the spirit of heroism which led him into distant lands to labor and die for the cause of Christ.

Failing to secure a supply for Smithland and Sac City, left vacant by the death of Brother Campbell, I saw no other way but to turn the whole district into a circuit, and go round it once in four weeks, the distance being about three hundred miles. With Brother Black and myself alternating, they would have preaching every two weeks. We started upon this new arrangement early in the spring.

Since this turned out to be one of the wet seasons, the traveling was perilous. For miles together we had to wade through mud and water, through sloughs, and rapid streams, endangering our own lives as well as those of our faithful animals; but not an appointment did we miss, except Carroll, where the crossing was impossible. In some instances when we came up to those deep creeks on the prairie, full to the banks, our only course was to take a hatchet, lop down the willows standing upon the bank, pile old broken rails upon these, with weeds and grass and driftwood, layer upon layer, until the resistance was such as to bear up a horse, and then pass over.

One of our prairies between Ida Grove and Sac City was forty miles across, without a house or a particle of water, which was an exception in our round. The only company to enjoy along this lonely way was now and then a little prairie bird flying up before my horse, or a hungry wolf following upon my track.

On the way from Ida Grove to Denison, which was about thirty miles distant, I once witnessed one of the most interesting sights of my life. As I reached the top of a little bluff, I came upon a hundred elk of various sizes. As I approached, they crossed the road a little before me, then formed a ring — the mothers with their fawns within; the males, with their great horns, completing the circle without. There they stood in this fortified position until I was out of sight. This was the grandest array of horned battalion that I ever witnessed, and was worth a journey of a hundred miles to see. I stopped my animal for some time to look into this living fortress, but they faced me with a look of defiance, as much as to say: "Come this way if you dare."

At Denison, among other good brethren, I must mention the name of Morris McHenry, who at this time was county surveyor and one of the pillars of the church. He was one of the men who would be an ornament to society in any place.

It was a pleasure to me to see these newly organized societies of the previous year now taking shape and becoming centers of a strong and prosperous church. During the summer at Sac City I baptized about twenty persons by immersion, at the same service. These were some of the fruits of the revival during the winter. In passing round our work, in going and returning, we had to pass through Ida Grove, the county seat of Ida County, where I always received a hearty welcome from John H. Moorehead, the first settler and principal man of the place. At that time there were only a few families and no church organization, but he had been raised a Methodist and was what might be called a pretty good orthodox sinner. I always enjoyed putting up with him and his kind family, and he was as well satisfied as myself.

My successor, upon leaving the circuit, inquired of Mr. Moorehead the amount of his indebtedness for such hospitality. Mr. Moorehead replied that he could not tell without looking up the account, whereupon he presented the following statement:

To lodging and meals, 11 days . . .	\$16.50
To feed and care of horse, 11 days . .	5.50
	<hr/>
Total indebtedness	\$22.00

At this point my ministerial brother began to

wonder whether, after this bill was paid he would have enough left to go to conference. As he was about to adjust his pocketbook in order to square the account, Mr. Moorehead interrupted. "See here, your credits are to come in before we strike the balance."

"Credits!" said the preacher. "I have no credits to offset that indebtedness!"

"Yes, you have," said my friend; and here they are:

By one Sunday service	\$10.00
By 33 blessings asked at meals, at \$.25 each	8.25
By 10 Scripture readings, at \$.45 each . . .	4.50
By one prayer, offered on one knee25
<hr/>	
Total credit	\$22.50

So, you see, in the end the preacher came out fifty cents ahead, which only gave elasticity to the joke.

There was a young man of sandy hair and light complexion teaching school at Sioux City in 1858, with whom I formed a very pleasant acquaintance. I was well aware at that time that he possessed the elements that would eventually bring him into public notice. He had great financial ability, and became an important life insurance executive, but above all, he maintained the character of a Christian. That young man was I. T. Martin.

I must also include among my pleasant acquaintances during the year, Ezra and Joseph Millard, who became wealthy bankers in Omaha, Nebraska. They were at that date just starting out in business life and, being young men of principle and good character, they pushed their way up to wealth and affluence.

It was at Sioux City also that I first formed the acquaintance of Rev. Cornelius F. McLean, who has been long a member of our conference. He had taken up a claim in Nebraska, opposite Sioux City, had built a cabin, and was occupying the land according to the demands of the law. At his request I went over to Dakota, a little town across the river, and preached, I think, the first sermon in the village. Subject: "Heaven's estimate of one repenting sinner." Whether there was joy in heaven on that day because of repenting sinners, is not yet revealed. But I went from the pulpit to my home happy in the consciousness of the soul's reward. As soon as Brother McLean could make his arrangements he entered upon the ministry, and now over twenty years he has been publishing the glad tidings of salvation.

Our young city at this time, like most pioneer towns, had its drawbacks, including saloons and gambling rooms, where many a soul was ruined and families disgraced. On one occasion I was

called upon to hold religious services over the body of a man who had died with the delirium tremens. As they had no other place, I stood up among the barrels of liquor. I referred, in my remarks, to the probabilities that this man was of respectable parentage, that he had grown up under the influence of religious training, had come out West to seek a home and fortune, followed by the sympathy and prayers of an interested mother that her dear boy might be honored and prospered in a land of strangers. And he himself as he left home was ardent with hope and solicitude that his way would be prospered. But he fell in with bad company, contracted bad habits, became a gambler and a drunkard, and here his earthly history ends in a liquor shop, with no mourners present but his companions in crime! Whilst I am attending the last services of this young man in this saloon, in the presence of these monuments of ruin, interested friends may be praying and hoping that health and prosperity attend him. Then came the appeal — that the same company and habits that had brought this man to his untimely end would result in their ruin also, and that their only safety was in a life of virtue and temperance. During these remarks they wept like children; but speak not of reform in a business which bears the inscription of disgrace and death.

The summer of 1858 was an exception, in that the rainy season continued until the last of August, up to the very time when we had to start to our annual conference. The creeks and rivers were bankfull and overflowing, and had I not been a practical swimmer our trip would have been impossible. Having finished the last round, we bade farewell to friends at Sioux City and Sergeant's Bluff and started on our way.

I had arranged to hold our last quarterly meeting at the different appointments, the first being at Smithland, thirty miles distant. Having closed up the labors of Saturday and Sabbath, without any marked results, on Monday morning we intended to start for our new appointment. But before starting, a delegation was sent, among whom were some of the unconverted, beseeching us to stay another day. A large number of persons were seeking the Lord. Such a motive I could not resist, and so appointed a meeting for Monday evening. Surely enough, ten or twelve seekers came forward, professed conversion, united with the church, and became faithful members.

Passing on to Sac City, we had a meeting of unusual interest. Those who were converted and baptized were to be taken into full connection. During this service, in giving them the right hand of fellowship, and requesting others to do so, a

wonderful spiritual manifestation attended, which filled every believing heart with joy and rejoicing. This was our last service in the district; twenty or thirty had been recently converted, and it was appropriate that our last meeting should be a pentecostal feast. At its close, I opened the doors of the church, and six of the principal men of the place came forward, who afterward became pillars in the church. Thus our labors in the Sioux City district came to a close.

On Monday morning a large number of Christian friends accompanied us to the river. Swimming our horse over the stream, we crossed in a small boat and, having hitched our horse to our buggy and waved to our friends still standing on the river bank, we started for Lyons, the seat of our coming conference. When almost out of sight, I cast a look backward, and still the friends were standing, waving a distant farewell. Such tokens of friendship and affection were heart-cheering after encountering the labors, hardships, and perils of the last two years, and it reminded me of the waving flag of welcome that they might be permitted to hang out as a signal when approaching the heavenly shores. There is no small event in the history of my ministerial labors that has left a more tender and touching impression than the last adieu of those Sac City friends. As

the husband and father can endure the hardships and dangers of the soldier when inspired by the love of liberty and home, so I felt that these memorials of true affection served to inspire me with greater heroism in the cause of Him who died for us.

Not many hours passed before the occasion was furnished in a very practical form. We came to a large stream, widened to ten or twelve rods. Now what was to be done? Brother Black, my traveling companion could not swim, the water was too deep to ford, and so I decided to test its depth by wading through. Carrying our blankets in my hands, extended upward, I started for the other shore, and found that I could just go through. The water came over my shoulders but, having safely landed, I deposited my load on the bank and then swam back after the second. Thus I continued wading and swimming alternately, until everything was over except Brother Black and the buggy. Fortunately, we had a rope, and so I fastened this to the shafts of my buggy, lashed the preacher fast to the rear, and Fanny pulled all in safety over to the opposite side. It was amusing to see a very short man rolling and whirling in the stream, but this was the only hope, for he was too short to wade and unable to swim. His trust was on that rope; and to that he ad-

hered like a faithful friend. Beyond the flood, standing on the shore of safety, he could sing in gratitude, like Miriam, "The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea, but out of all the rope hath delivered me."

When I describe the method of crossing in one instance, it embraces our entire water experience, except in cases where the streams were too deep to wade. Then I had to swim over in advance, then my horse came, afterward my traveling companion and appendages. Thus we persevered onward until the second afternoon, when we reached the dividing ridge. If two men were ever grateful for dangers passed and victories won, we were when our horse's feet stood firmly on solid ground.

As I looked back toward the Missouri Valley, time also seemed to pass in retrospect. Two years had gone by since I entered this work; and though I had encountered hardships, braved dangers, and suffered the loss of many social pleasures, yet I had been honored with the privilege of preaching the gospel where its joyful sound had never been heard, organizing new societies, establishing new Sunday schools, witnessing the conversion of many souls, and laying the foundation for the future growth and prosperity of the church of Christ. In leaving this work my report to the conference was as follows: members, 141; proba-

tioners, 36; baptisms, 24; churches, 1; Sunday schools, 6; scholars, 158; preaching places, 10.

S. P. Yeomans, who was then the register of the land office at Sioux City, wrote years later: "It is generally thought that, to find the heroic in Methodism, we must go back to the early days of our church history; but when I call to mind (as I often do) your trials and privations as you buffeted the terrible winter storms of twenty-five years ago in the Sioux City work, laboring with your own hands for the support which the scattered membership was unable to afford, I am firm in the conviction that your faith, zeal and endurance in the Master's work were hardly surpassed by the old pioneers of Methodism. As we now look over the field, we are enabled to see clearly that your labor was not in vain. The seed that you scattered in that virgin soil has taken root and already yielded an abundant harvest. The apparently barren field which you then traversed has now become a mighty center of Methodism, whose influence is felt through all northwestern Iowa and the territory beyond; another evidence of the verity of that grand old promise, 'Lo, I am with you alway'."

The remainder of our trip across the State was very pleasant, and rendered the more so by the pleasant Sabbath spent in Marshalltown with

Brother Henderson. On this day I preached from "Never man spake like this man," and Brother Black gave us a sermon in the evening. On the following Thursday we reached Honey Creek camp meeting, near Marengo, and there I met again my old friend and former colleague, Rev. William Simpson. Farther on our way to Lyons we enjoyed the luxury of a short visit at the home of Hiram Price at Davenport, and preached for them on the Sabbath. On the following Tuesday we all met at Lyons, and thus closed my ministry in the Sioux City district.

LANDON TAYLOR